

The Critical Role of Web Accessibility in Health Information Access, Understanding & Use

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Today you'll learn key insights from:

- **A web accessibility audit of over 100 top US hospital website home pages**
- **A survey of older adults and patients with disabilities**
- **Conversations with staff at some of the top-scoring hospitals in our audit**



2023 FINALIST

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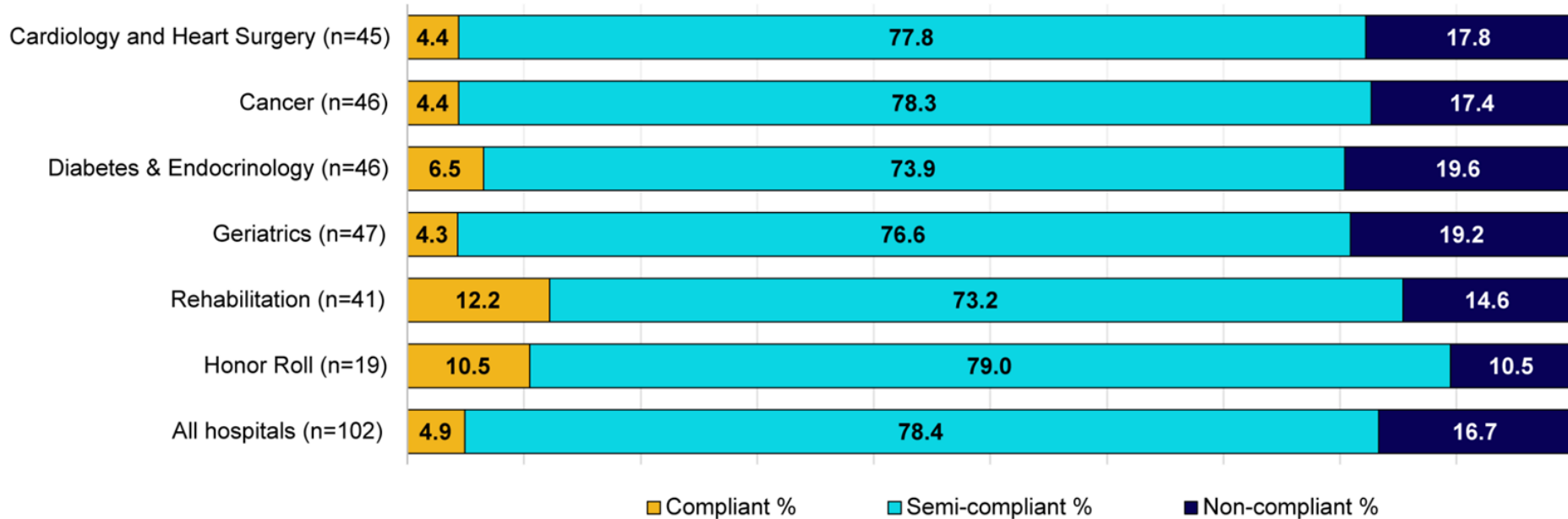
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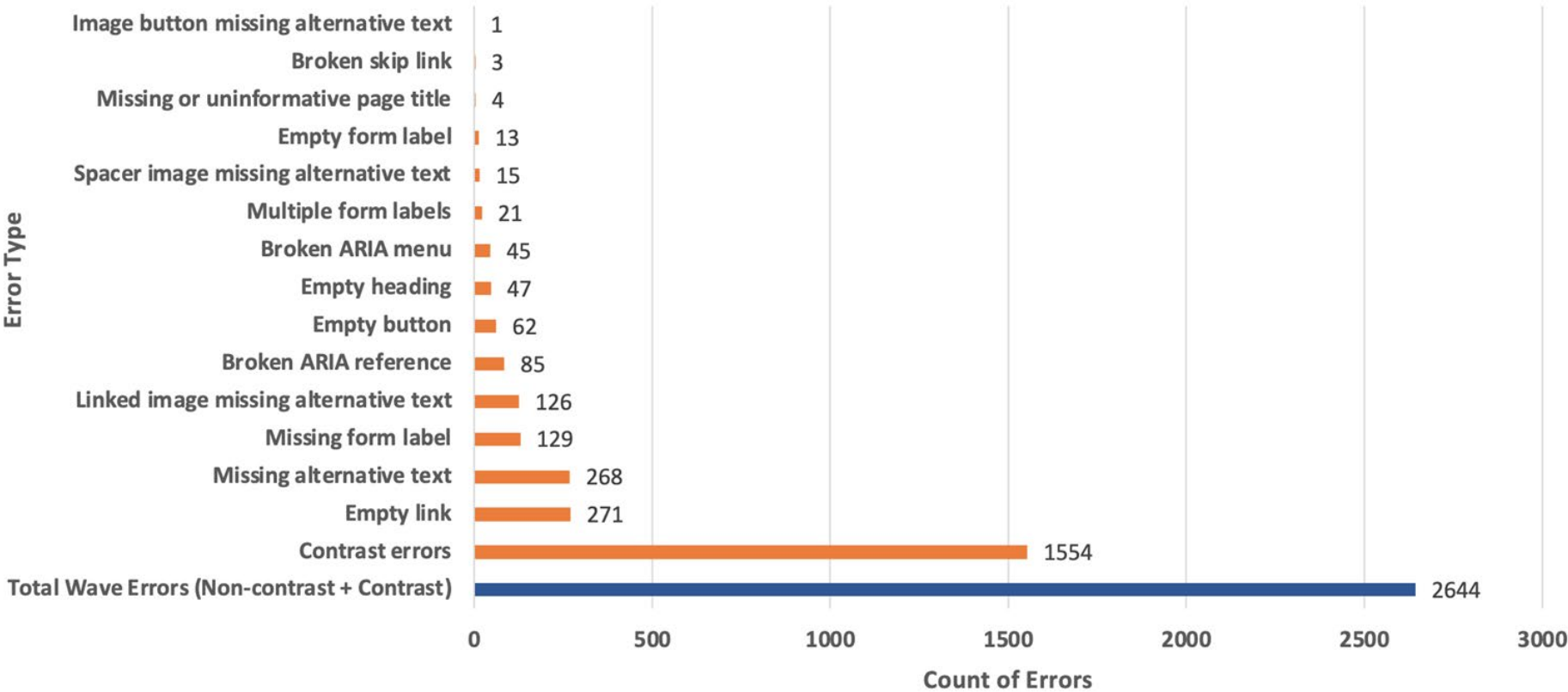
About the Study

- Published in October 2022
- Utilized 2021-2022 US News and World Report's Best Hospital rankings of 106 hospitals
- Reviewed home pages only as they represent the “Digital Front Door” and provide patient portal access

Percentage of Home Pages Demonstrating Scanning Tool Compliance By Top Hospital Ranking List Type



Number of WAVE Errors by Type Across Over 100 Top-Ranked Hospital Home Pages



Study Limitations

- **Automated accessibility testing tools have limitations.**
Compare it to a screening vs. a diagnosis.
- **Accessibility testing tools don't guarantee compliance.**
Although the term “semicompliant” gives the impression that a website might need only a few fixes to be compliant, for patients with disabilities, a semicompliant site is one that they will likely have trouble navigating.

Key Findings from an Online Survey of Older Adults and People with Disabilities

1. Older adults and patients with disabilities face barriers to accessing their health information electronically.
2. Many use some form of assistive technology and have struggled to use a hospital website and/or patient portal.

Survey Participant Recruitment



To ensure diversity in survey participants, AHIMA Foundation contracted with Knowbility to recruit:

- 5 participants who have **low vision**
- 5 participants who have a **mobility related disability**
- 5 participants who are **d/Deaf or hard of hearing**
- 5 participants with a **cognitive disability**

Survey Results

Q: Is it easy for you to access your health information electronically, for example, blood test results or after-visit summaries?

“No. The data is often presented as charts or tables that aren't readable with a screen reader. Additionally, many times the data are only available as untagged PDFs, which means that I cannot easily move around the document except read it from start to finish.”

- Corbb, a 34-year-old man with a disability living in Minneapolis, MN

Survey Results

Q: When using a patient portal, like MyChart, are you able to navigate to the information you need?

“Partially, only because forms with radio buttons are labeled correctly. If there are graphics, even with alt-text, voiceover or JAWS will simply say ‘Graphic’ rather than reading me the text in the picture.”

- **Sasha, a 37-year-old woman with disabilities living in Austin, Texas**

Survey Results

Q: Tell us about a time where you struggled to use a hospital or healthcare website, access your health information, or set up a doctor's appointment.

“I tried to go onto my health system website, but I was unable to adjust the font big enough so I could see it.”

- Ralph, an older adult from Chicago, IL

Survey Results

Q: Tell us about a time when it was easy to access a hospital or healthcare website, access your health information, or set up a doctor's appointment. What made it easy for you?

“I like the VA Healthcare website which syncs up well with my assistive software. There are very few problems on that one because of the compatibility.”

- **Rion, a Veteran living with multiple disabilities in Madison, Wisconsin**

What We've Learned From Conversations with Staff at Top-Ranking Hospitals

Northwestern Medicine

RUSH

University of Washington Medicine

Mount Sinai



Summary Recommendations

1

Beware of the quick fix. Website accessibility overlay tools powered by AI can sometimes make accessibility issues even worse.

2

Collaboration is key. Collaborating across departments in the hospital will help ensure digital accessibility issues are addressed and patients needs are met.

3

More education and awareness is needed. Hire a full-time employee to oversee digital accessibility efforts in the hospital or health system. Rather than contracting out remediation work for a one-time website overhaul, have a digital accessibility coordinator and set up a work group that includes decision makers across departments – especially those working on the patient portal.

4

More funding opportunities are needed available to support hospitals and health systems with digital accessibility and translation initiatives. Outside of the federal and state government, knowledge of 508 best practices are lacking. Accessibility takes time, expertise, and dedicated funding.

Thank You!

Visit AhimaFoundation.org for more
information.

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